

City of Alameda – AC Transit ILC

January 30, 2024 Meeting Notes

1. Roll Call/Welcome and Introductions

Attendees: Councilmember Tracy Jensen (chair), Director Sarah Syed, Director Chris Peeples

Meeting started at 9:03 a.m.

2. Announcements/Public Comments

None

3. Notes from the Previous ILC Meeting (October 25, 2023)

None

4. AC Transit Realign Phase 4 Draft

Robert Del Rosario: At the January 24, 2024 AC Transit Board Meeting, the AC Transit Board of Directors voted to delay Realign by 6 months. The Board had concerns about the plan reducing service to equity priority communities. Staff will go back to the drawing board and do some analysis to look at different scenarios and will bring plans back to the Board for review in the next 3 months. The goal now is to implement Realign in March 2025, but that is pending public hearing, Board approval, and negotiation with labor partners.

Director Peeples: A couple meetings back we had directed staff to bring a proposal that emphasizes reliability. There have been ongoing concerns about missed trips. There are tradeoffs with improving reliability, and the Board was not happy with some of the tradeoffs. For example, one of the things we directed staff to come back with is a scenario where Transbay service is truncated to only serve BART stations. But this may not apply to Alameda Transbay lines.

Robert Del Rosario: Would also add that the 6-month extension buys staff some time to do additional analysis based on Board and public comments, but the proposals may not be fully baked in 3 months when we come back to the Board.

Director Syed: To share some anecdotal data that led to the thinking about Transbay - a former Alameda Councilmember got stuck on a Transbay bus a few months ago due to the Bay Bridge protest/shutdown, and ultimately the bus driver took those passengers to West Oakland BART. This is an option we will continue to look at closely and get rider input about. Would need to look at areas in our network where riders have an alternative, and where BART has capacity. Had concerns about the aggressive Realign timeline since the beginning, and having more time to do additional analysis is going to help us develop a plan that is more equitable and better for the community.

Director Peeples: Our current system is not working - there are far too many cancelled trips. Not a functional system. That's why we want to address reliability.

Director Syed: This will also give us an opportunity to look at other factors to improve reliability (e.g., working with labor and operations, looking at how to manage the system).

Director Peeples: Alameda is the model for how the cities can help us.

Director Syed: Right, being able to go to our city partners to implement transit priority improvements.

Councilmember Jensen: AC Transit has done good outreach in Alameda. We are not thrilled with the proposed changes under Realign, but at least riders were aware of what potential changes could be happening. Reliability and safety are very important to address of course. I appreciate the comments about potentially truncating Transbay lines at BART stations, especially now with the regional efforts to promote multimodal connectivity. AC Transit may need to take a leadership role on this kind of effort. Since Alameda doesn't have rail options, we do rely on AC Transit for options to get in and out of the island. There are also concern about potential loss of the direct line to OAK, as well as potential reduction to service on the lines that students access.

Lisa Foster: Having some more time for Realign will be easier on staff and the community to provide time to respond and give feedback.

Brian McGuire: The pause in Realign gives Alameda more time to coordinate more with the Alameda TMA, which has growing budgets as more projects go up. Good opportunity to increase coordination efforts.

Maria Henderson: Thank you to Councilmember Jensen for your comments on Outreach, and to City staff on the coordination efforts to get on City meeting agendas. I will be emailing and sharing information with community members on what's next for Realign.

Public Comment: I sit on the TJPA advisory committee. As a Transbay bus user, I'm disappointed with the possibility of discontinuing all Transbay service or truncating Transbay at BART stations. Concerned about paying rents at Salesforce Transit Center? Ambitions of making Salesforce Transit Center a major transit terminal would be ended. I also understand that COVID created ridership concerns, but I would like to know what kinds of impacts any service cuts will have down the line. Once you make cuts it's hard to restore service. Would hate to see future demand in Alameda but not enough service to respond to that demand.

Director Peeples: BART's estimation is 30 years before they get back to the capacity they had in 2019.

Public Comment (CJ Hirschfield): I consider myself a heavy user of transit in Alameda. I have concerns about the latest proposals for Lines 51A and 6 and the loss of direct service to Kaiser Oakland. Alameda no longer has a Kaiser pharmacy, so the direct route along Broadway to Kaiser Oakland is very important. Also concerned about Line 21 and the loss of direct service to OAK. Cutting back Line O to hourly on weekends is also a problem, want to see that service maintained at 30 minutes.

Robert Del Rosario: In response to the comment about the 51 - the initial recommendation was to combine the 51A and 51B, but based on feedback we heard, due to reliability concerns, we proposed the changes to 51 and 6 (proposed Line 51 would travel from Berkeley Marina and downtown Berkeley, along College Ave and Broadway, to Lake Merritt BART; proposed Line 6 would travel from downtown Berkeley, along Telegraph, through Alameda, to Fruitvale BART). These changes were intended to try to address the reliability of the 51, but of course there were tradeoffs and we'll revisit and continue to evaluate as we look at alternatives.

Councilmember Jensen: Good considerations about the pharmacy - I'm not aware that there's service to Kaiser San Leandro, and a large portion of Alamedans are covered by Kaiser, so that is something we'd definitely want to weigh in on.

Kat Kaldis: Would like to reiterate that losing the one-seat ride to Kaiser Oakland is a huge loss for Alameda citizens. When the Realign plan is figured out, would be good to do workshops/education about the changes with the people enrolled in the Free Bus Pass program.

5. AC Transit Redistricting

Linda Nemeroff: Update on the AC Transit Redistricting process which concluded on December 13. The process involved the implementation of a seven-ward election system and phasing out of at-large representatives over the course of the 2024 and 2026 election cycles. The Board voted to select the Jade Plan (Alameda is in Ward 3, including parts of Oakland up to the Oakland Hills, and does not include OAK). For election sequencing - Wards 1, 2, and 6 are up for election in 2024, and Wards 3, 4, 5, and 7 are up for election in 2026.

Director Peeples: Alameda is kept all together in the new Ward 3.

Director Syed: Each ward got smaller since we went from 5 to 7 wards. I would no longer be representing Alameda in 2026. The positives of this plan are it keeps Alameda with Jack London Square and important connections to downtown, which the current ward lacks. It also offers other cities the opportunity to be unified.

Councilmember Jensen: Which seats are up in 2024?

Director Syed: Wards 1 (West Contra Costa, Albany), 2 (Berkeley, Emeryville, Oakland), and 6 (Fairview, Hayward, Newark)

Councilmember Jensen: Is Kaiser Oakland in the new Ward 3?

Director Syed: Yes

Public Comment: One of the greatest strengths of AC Transit is the elected Board. I'm concerned about potential consolidation of transit agencies throughout the Bay Area. With consolidation, the responsiveness of agencies would go away. I appreciate the responsiveness of AC Transit Board members both currently and in my previous experience.

6. Transit Supportive Design Guidelines

Crystal Wang: The Transit Supportive Design Guidelines effort is an update to our 2018 Multimodal Design Guidelines, and we're updating the document to include guidance on paratransit operations, more specifics on design features or roadway conditions for buses to safely operate, and other transit considerations like layover space. We had our first Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) meeting in November, which consisted of representatives from the cities and jurisdictions in our service area. We're currently working on finalizing the complete first draft of the Guidelines, and we expect to have that ready to share by late February. We'll be setting up our second TAC meeting soon to share the first draft of the Guidelines with the city and jurisdiction staff, and we also intend to present and get feedback from BPACs, accessibility advisory committees, and other groups. For Alameda we're going to present this topic to the Transportation Commission on February 28th, and we'd also like to go to the Commission on Persons with Disabilities so I'll be reaching out to City staff soon to get on an upcoming agenda.

Councilmember Jensen: Are there any Alameda representatives on the TAC?

Crystal Wang: Yes, Rochelle Wheeler

Director Peeples: We've done this effort a couple times now. San Diego has a good Guidelines document. Useful reference document.

7. AC Transit Ridership and Complaints with Actual Missed Runs

Crystal Wang: The agenda packet includes an attachment with the performance summary for lines operating in Alameda, for August through November 2023. Ridership hasn't fluctuated much, and most of these lines are around where they should be in terms of productivity, but Line 19 still needs improvement. For on-time performance (OTP), our OTP standard is 72%, so some of these lines haven't been

meeting that standard during this timeframe. On customer feedback, most of the complaints we received are related to no shows, pass-ups, and buses running late. We also wanted to acknowledge that we have received some customer complaints specifically about the new Transbay buses. Just at a high-level, generally we've heard comments about the design of the bus (stairs being too steep and the aisle being too narrow), about issues with the wheelchair ramp deployment, some complaints of overcrowding, and some complaints about issues with on-board equipment (instances of the WiFi not working). We can provide a more in-depth discussion on this specific topic at the next ILC meeting.

Councilmember Jensen: What's the biggest driver of complaints of pass-ups and no shows?

Robert Del Rosario and Michael Eshleman: Time of year and operator issues

Brian McGuire: It would be interesting to overlay the complaint category with total operator hours. Would help to illuminate the issue.

Director Syed: Does staff have any updates on the Line 96?

Crystal Wang: There are still road closures on Midway and Pan Am, so Line 96 is still on detour.

Brian McGuire: Detour-related construction will be ongoing for a few more months, possibly through the summer.

8. Free Bus Pass Pilot Program for Seniors and People with Disabilities Update

Kat Kaldis: The popularity of the free bus pass program continues. There is an average of 4 requests per week from residents outside the City. Over 800 passes today, and more than 119,000 rides have been taken, an average of 346 rides per day, average cost of \$1.14 per ride. We're currently a year and half into the pilot program. 86% of rides are on Alameda lines. 12% of rides occur between 6-8:30am, and 25% of rides occur between 3pm-12am. The number of unique riders has been increasing. The City did a survey of seniors and persons with disabilities - 98% of users said they would continue using the passes, 54% ride the bus 2-3 times per week, 68% report having the Free Bus Pass + an additional pass (ex: senior Clipper card), 12% reported that service to the ferry terminals is important - specifically Main Street and Seaplane Lagoon. Over 65% of program participants are monolingualistic.

Director Peeples: Why do people need to have 2 Clipper cards?

Nichele Laynes: The reason people need to carry 2 cards is because we put the institutional Free Bus pass on an adult card. So they would need to have the second card to receive any discounts they are eligible for. We are hoping this can be rectified in Clipper 2 so that we can add institutional passes on discounted cards. Also, customers can call AC Transit's Call Center to speak to a translator.

Director Syed: Could we put the institutional pass on a discounted card if the person qualifies?

Nichele Laynes: Right now it's a product limitation - the technology currently isn't able to allow an institutional pass on anything but an adult card.

Kat Kaldis: On one hand it's nice to have everything loaded on one card, however, since so many people lose cards it may be challenging to get things transitioned over smoothly when cards need to be replaced.

Councilmember Jensen: Are you finding participants are confused about having to carry 2 cards?

Kat Kaldis: No, since the senior Clipper card is white and the adult Clipper card is blue.

Director Syed: Everyone should take a look at the comments from the survey, Kat is doing a phenomenal job.

Councilmember Jensen: Does any other City have a program like this?

Director Peeples: Alameda is the model.

Nichele Laynes: This is a unique program.

Councilmember Jensen: During the next survey, or informally, we should ask people if they make that direct connection to Kaiser Oakland. Would be important feedback for Realign.

Brian McGuire: Do we have a sense of the budget and funding availability to grow this?

Kat Kaldis: We currently have room to go, we can go up to 17,000 per month. Depends on ACTC funding. Also depends on the AIM program (TNC concierge program). Expect we'll have a waitlist for the Free Bus Pass Program in the next 6 months.

New Development/Transportation Management Association Update

Lucy Gigli: The EasyPass program is available to all TMA members, free bus pass for local and Transbay service. The Alameda TMA is now part of the regional BayPass program (just launched in January), so all of our bus pass holders can ride any transit in the Bay Area, for free. A lot of demand for the BayPass. Many TMA members in the Alameda Point area want access to the ferries, especially since there's not a lot of AC Transit service in the area. It's really important for us to be part of pilots like this since we want to know what it takes for people to consider changing travel modes.

Kat Kaldis: When the TMA issues the passes, is it one pass per household?

Lucy Gigli: They get one per household, and can purchase extra passes at the highly discounted rate. ~\$200 per year to get access to all regional transit.

Councilmember Jensen: Terrific, Alameda is really innovative

9. Next Meetings

Thursday, April 18, 2024 at 9 a.m.

Thursday, July 18, 2024 at 9 a.m.

Thursday, October 17, 2024 at 9 a.m.

10. Agenda Planning Requests

Councilmember Jensen: Suggest we learn more about the regional BayPass, how its working in Alameda, and how it could work better, perhaps with our free pass for seniors

Director Peeples: General Manager Hursh can probably make that presentation on BayPass

Councilmember Jensen: Want to get a better understanding of Alameda residents' need to get to Kaiser Oakland

Director Syed: Would also be nice to get data on how many Alameda residents are going to Kaiser San Leandro

11. Announcements/Public Comments

a. Adjourned 10:25am